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1962/11/16



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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

CU E 734/1

1602 16 November 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL TAYLOR

Attached is an estimate prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency in response to Captain Shepard's telephone call that the President was still looking for further information on the Soviet arms build-up in Cuba.

It is a nice looking job and evidently reflects considerable effort. I think it could very well be sent forward. It is a little unusual in that the last paragraph of the summary (see paper clip) reflects an operational evaluation which is hardly appropriate for DIA; however, it is an accurate reflection of JCS papers on the subject. I do feel that the estimate is to a certain extent a tabulation of available information and does not represent too much deep thinking into the subject. My main reservations are reflected in the attached memorandum for the President. It also occurs to me that the estimate does not reflect the location and time - space factors involved in the use of the Soviet task forces in Cuba, the known or deduced organization of the Cuban Army and its ability to use the equipment, or the extent by which the Cubans or the Communists could protect themselves against air attack by active or passive means during the implementation of Plan 312 prior to the execution of 316.

If a quick answer to the President is what is desired, I would say the estimate is completely adequate. On the other hand, if a more thorough job is required, DIA could be requested to go into some of the elements raised in the draft memorandum and above.

J. J. E.

Doc 1-5-169-89

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I have been informed that you still have some questions in your mind as to the effect of any increased quantities of conventional equipment which have been introduced into Cuba.

The attached Defense Intelligence Agency Estimate, "Assessment of Increased Conventional Military Capabilities of Cuban and Soviet Units in Cuba," has been prepared to meet this need. It is based on available intelligence and summarizes latest JCS thinking as to the effect on our operational plans.

I would like to add two comments:

a. First, it is quite clear that there are in Cuba at present about four Russian armored combat groupings of larger than battalion size. These groupings very probably have a nuclear capability. Although our operational plans are such that these units could be handled with reasonable facility, it should not be overlooked that the presence of four highly trained Russian units with the most modern equipment gives the Communist forces in Cuba a very useful general reserve in the event of combat.

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b. The quantities of equipment which have been shipped to Cuba are quite large considering the size of the country and of the Cuban forces. This is particularly true in the case of armor and artillery. This can only be based on speculation but one might harbor the thought that the Russians have deliberately sent more equipment than is necessary with the thought of establishing stockpiles in Cuba, either for the purpose of future shipment to other Latin American countries or to support the rapid introduction of Soviet military personnel in some future contingency. I am asking Defense Intelligence Agency to pursue this thought further with a view to testing out its validity.

It is also useful to speculate on the effect of the withdrawal of Soviet military personnel. I think it can be stated that if the operational personnel, particularly in the armored task forces, the air defenses, communications and air units, were withdrawn in the near future, the Cuban forces would be unable to maintain or operate much of the equipment. If all Soviet personnel, including operational and technical advisors and trainers, were withdrawn, the ability of the Cuban forces to utilize any of this equipment, except the most basic types, would be quite limited.

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